



The State of New Hampshire
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Thomas S. Burack, Commissioner

January 31, 2008

The Honorable Cindy Rosenwald, Chairman
Health, Human Services & Elderly Affairs Committee
NH House of Representatives
Room 205, Legislative Office Building
Concord, NH 03301

Re: HB 1505-FN, an act establishing the New Hampshire birth conditions program

Dear Chairman Rosenwald and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Department of Environmental Services (DES) on HB 1505-FN, which seeks to establish the New Hampshire Birth Conditions Program. While the Department is not taking an official position on HB 1505-FN at this time, this letter conveys our perspective on the bill as it relates to our programs and mission to protect human health and the environment.

We understand that currently the Birth Conditions Program is a CDC-funded, Dartmouth-operated public health registry that has been monitoring birth conditions in New Hampshire under a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for several years. The Program is similar to the cancer registry for New Hampshire. HB 1505-FN would make this existing program permanent, and places the continuing responsibility of administering the Birth Conditions Program on DHHS.

The DES Environmental Health Program routinely conducts health risk assessments to evaluate relationships between potential environmental exposures and adverse health outcomes in New Hampshire communities. Currently, DES works closely with DHHS to evaluate health outcomes such as cancer incidence, but residents are often also concerned with other health outcomes including certain birth conditions. Birth conditions can be influenced by many factors, including environmental or occupational exposures. Clusters or cases of certain birth conditions can be sentinel events that may prompt analyses of potential exposures to environmental hazards. Data on the incidence and prevalence of certain birth conditions and the possibility of case clusters could provide valuable information when evaluating sources of environmental contamination and determining the need for response actions. A statewide birth conditions registry would be an asset to the DES Environmental Health Program by providing accurate, on-going data that can be used in our efforts to assure that the health of New Hampshire residents is not adversely impacted by environmental exposures.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please contact me (271-2958) or Richard Rumba, Environmental Health Program Administrator (271-1987) if you have any questions or would like further information.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Burack
Thomas S. Burack
Commissioner

cc: Representative A. Matarazzo Sr.
Senator M. Fuller Clark
Senator K. Sgambati